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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [CH](#)  
SUBJECT: MORE ON THE CHINESE IN SURINAME

REF: A. STATE 70035  
    [1](#)B. PARAMARIBO 340  
    [1](#)C. PARAMARIBO 425  
    [1](#)D. PARAMARIBO 426  
    [1](#)E. 7/7 LEONARD-FORDEN E-MAIL

Classified By: AMBASSADOR MARSHA E. BARNES, REASONS 1.4B & D

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Recent interactions with the departing Chinese ambassador reflect his country's deepening presence in Suriname as well as a tolerance for unsavory politicians on the local scene. The new Chinese ambassador to Suriname comes from the PRC Embassy in Washington, D.C. End summary.

[1](#)2. (C) At a farewell dinner hosted by Chinese ambassador Jinghua for his American and Dutch counterparts, Ambassador Barnes recalled that Assistant Secretary Shannon had been pleased with his recent visit to Asia to consult on relations with Latin America. The ambassador noted the opening of new Chinese Embassies in several CARICOM countries as indicative of more active Chinese engagement in the Caribbean. Reflecting that trend in Suriname, Jinghua outlined an ambitious construction program that would result in a new Chinese ambassador's residence, chancery, and a townhouse compound for staff quarters over the next three years, on the premises of existing Chinese properties along the Suriname river, not far from the U.S. and Dutch residences. Although there are substantial numbers of Chinese workers already in the country from the recently completed construction of Suriname's new Ministry of Foreign Affairs building, new groups of Chinese workers would be brought in to work on the diplomatic compound.

[1](#)3. (C) This turned the conversation to the question of Chinese immigrants to Suriname, and the numbers who naturalize as Surinamers. The ambassador inquired if the inflow had caused an increased Embassy workload to address the needs of these citizens. After some discussion between Jinghua and his deputy, they came to a figure of something over 100 Chinese nationals acquiring Surinamese citizenship each year. This process requires divesting of Chinese citizenship as the PRC does not recognize dual nationality. Perhaps unintentionally reinforcing the perception that arriving Chinese in fact view Suriname as a way station to other destinations (including the United States), the Deputy said the Embassy's passport renewal workload was not heavily affected, since most Chinese arrive with a new passport, "and they are valid for five years." He went on to stress the Embassy's advice to its nationals to integrate themselves into Suriname, in particular by learning the local language Sranantongo.

[1](#)4. (C) The farewell dinner followed closely on the

Venezuelan national day reception (ref c) to which the former military dictator, convicted narcotics trafficker Desi Bouterse, had been invited. Both the American and Dutch ambassadors expressed disapproval of the Venezuelans' decision to invite Bouterse, who is the subject of an internationally recognized arrest warrant based on his narcotics conviction in absentia in the Netherlands. Ambassador Jinghua's reply began by stressing the need to maintain normal relations with all countries regardless of their policies, referring to Venezuela, but then challenged the notion that it was inappropriate to receive Bouterse. In a disquieting exchange that he repeated a few days later at a U.S.-hosted event, Jinghua dismissed the Dutch narcotics conviction, duly reported to Interpol, as irrelevant. Citing the notion that people should be treated as innocent until proven guilty, Jinghua argued that if Bouterse had not been convicted in Suriname, his treatment should not be constrained in Suriname.

15. (SBU) Turning to recent reports that a Chinese company had been a bidder on new oil exploration blocks, the Ambassador said his embassy had had no contact with the Embassy. As noted ref (d), Jinghua speculated that this company's interest was more likely to be in equipment sales than actual exploration.

16. (C) Reflecting on his time in Suriname, the Chinese ambassador expressed frustration with the difficulty of working with the Government of Suriname and its slow decision and action processes (note: a characterization none of his diplomatic colleagues would dispute.) The ambassador revealed that his successor was coming from the Chinese Embassy in Washington, where he is a Minister Counselor. Jinghua described the new Ambassador, Dr. Su Ge, as a scholar, holding a PhD in international relations, specializing in the Americas. Per ref (e), Su was formerly the director of a government think tank called the China Institute of International Studies, and is the author of a book on U.S.-China relations. As noted in Ref B, Chen Jinghua will next be posted to Jamaica, and expects to arrive there in November. He is outgoing, his English is good, and he clearly enjoyed his earlier posting to Washington at the Embassy.  
BARNES